

TWENTY
CASES of CONSCIENCE

Propounded to the

BISHOPS,

Or others, who are called

FATHERS in GOD.

For them to Answer ;

That the Blind may not be turned out of the
Way, nor the People Perish for lack of Knowledge.
And that the Way of Truth may be known from the
Way of Errour.

The which also may serve as a Glasse, to shew to the Igno-
rant the Spots and Deformities in the Way of their Worship,
As also some of the Reasons why many Godly People
Refuse to Worship with the Multitude.

By J. C.



*Their fear towards me is taught by the Precepts
In vain do they worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.*

Si Christum discis, scis est, si cetera nescis.

Si Christum nescis, nihil est, si cetera discis.

I Seeing the Scripture saith, That we may not do the least evil, that good
may come of it, and that no man can redeem his Brother out of the Pit,
nor be a Ransome for his Soul; but every man is to be perswaded in his
own mind, and so to obey :

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether any person, or
persons coun'el whatsoever, should be embraced and followed, untill, or unless
a man be first perswaded of it (and satisfied concerning it) in his own Judg-
ment and Conscience, without sinning against God, and procuring his dis-
pleasure, for his Lame Sacrifice, and Blind Obedience?

I I. Seeing we read in the Scriptures, in sundry places, That every man must
give

give an account of himself to God, and appear before his Judgement Seat, to give an account for things done in the body, whether they be good or evil; and the Soul that sinneth he shall dye. These things rightly and truly considered,

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether a man that thus believes, may without sin at any time, or in any wayes, go, or do, contrary to his Conscience, and Perswasion herein; notwithstanding any Threats, or Penalties, or Lawes made by any man or men, to the contrary whatsoever?

II I. Seeing the great Apostle saith, *Follow me, as I follow Christ*; and the Apostle John saith, *He that believeth in Christ, ought himself so to walk, even as he also walked*: and the Apostle Peter saith, *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an Example*; that we should follow his Steps. These things truly believed,

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether such a man, that is so perswaded, as aforesaid, may follow any Example, or Examples, (in any men) who walk either contrary, or not according to the Practices of Christ and his Apostles, before mentioned, without sinning against the Light and Grace of Christ in his own Conscience?

III. Seeing Peter and John were commanded by the Council, *To speak no more at all, nor teach in the Name of Jesus*; to which Peter and the other Apostles answered and said, *We ought to obey God, rather than men*. And seeing Pharaoh King of Egypt, commanded Israel to stay in the Land, and to observe his Orders, and charged them with Rebellion for their Refusal; yet did they not observe his Command, but chose to obey the Lord, in passing to the Land which he had given them: And seeing Daniel, and the three Children, Refused Nebuchadnezzars Command, notwithstanding the great Penalty that was to Inue; and you justify them in so doing,

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether Disobedience to men, and their Laws, may not sometimes, and in some cases be justly esteemed, and accounted Obedience to God; and may be done as truly for Conscience sake, as Submission and Subjection may be said to be unto other Commands, that are Lawful and Just?

V. Seeing the Old Testament saith, *That every thing in difference was to be confirmed out of the mouth of two or three Witnesses*, not mentioning or commanding that the Witnesses should swear; but on the contrary hath provided that the false witnesses for their Testimony, shall suffer the same punishment, that he should have done against whom they witnessed, had their Testimony been true: and seeing that the Kings of Israel were neither made by an Oath, nor the People Sworn to Subjection; And in the New Testament, there is no example of any man, that ever Swore or took a Formal Oath (by vertue of Gods Command) but on the contrary, there is a Cloud of Witnesses against all Swearing; as Christ saith in *Mat. 5. Swear not at all*; and the Apostle Paul changes the word SWEAR, into the word CONFESSE to God, in two of his Epistles, *Rom. 14. Phil. 2.* and saith, *Heb. 6.* that Christ is come to do THAT in and amongst True Believers, which an Oath did, or was taken to do in the times of the Law, which was to end Strife and Debate; and James the Apostle saith, *Above all Things, Swear not*, neither by this, nor that, nor any other Oath. These things truly believed and received in simplicity as they are spoken.

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether a man that thus believeth, and is satisfied in his heart and Conscience concerning the same, may lawfully, without sinning against the God of Heaven and Earth, take any Oath, or Swear at all in any Case; notwithstanding any Penalties, Laws, or Commands

mands of men to the contrary whatsoever? And whether, if such an one should Swear, either to please the King, or to procure his own Liberty, and save his Estate, whether any of these can become an Aronement for him, or pacifie Gods Wrath and Anger against him for his sin?

V I. Seeing the Scripture saith, *That the Saints ought not to forsake the Assembling of themselves together, but so much the more to meet, as either the day of Trial or Adversitie, or Peace, and Prosperitie doth approach, and would hinder; and if there be a drawing back, or forsaking of Meeting together after Illumination, and knowledge of what is Gods Way and Worship, (and seeing the Scripture saith) Gods Soul will take no pleasure in such a one; and that nothing may be expected by him, who so draws back, but a fearful looking for of Judgement, to Devour and Destroy those who so refuse to meet together,*

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether such Person or Persons may, or ought, (without sinning against God, and his, or their own Consciences) refuse to meet with the Saints to Worship God, and wait upon him, according to such a Discovery and Manifestation, notwithstanding any Decree, Proclamation, or Commandment whatsoever to the contrary?

V II. Seeing the Scripture saith, *He that giveth flattering Titles to men, displeaseth the Lord: And the Apostle saith, He that Respecteth mens Persons, commits sin: And Christ saith, How can ye Believe, while ye seek Honour one of another? and his very enemies bore witness for him, That he Respected no mans Person; and it is left upon Record, as the Commendation of Mordecai, That he would not Bow to the Person of Haman (though the second man in the Kingdom)*

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether a man that believes, and is perswaded concerning the Truth of these things, may without sinning against his God (and Provoking him to Wrath) give Flattering Titles to men, or Respect their Persons; notwithstanding any Custom or Command from men to the contrary whatsoever?

V III. Seeing the Scripture saith, *That they that will live Godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecutions: And Christ saith, Blessed are you when men Persecute, and Hate you for my Names sake; and he that will be Christs Disciple, must suffer with him, and take up his Cross daily, and follow him, that he may find Rest to his Soul; and he that will Reign with him, must Suffer with him; and those that follow the Lamb, are said to go through great Tribulations;*

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether a man that is perswaded concerning the Truth of these things, may without sinning against his God, avoid or Fly from suffering for Christ, though it be to the loss of Libertie, Estate and Life also, if he be thereunto called, without sinning against Christ, and denying him before men; notwithstanding any command from any of the Sons of men to the contrary?

I X. Seeing many say, *They are the Apostles Successors, and sent by Christ; and yet neither walk in his Steps, nor his Apostles, but contrary to both, wearing Sumptuous Apparell, and farcing Delitiously every day, and dwelling in Great Palaces, and Sealed Houses, when as Christ had not whereon to lay his Head; and his Apostles laboured with their Hands, lest they should make the Gospel Chargeable; and it was their Meat and Drink to do their Masters will; and some of them said they could do nothing against, but for the Truth, and they had learned to be content in every Condition: and seeing those that say they are their Successors, and cannot be content in any Condition, but are changing with Times, and seeking glory things for themselves,*

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether a man that is truly Enlightened with the knowledge of these things, may give the tenth of his increase, or otherwise maintain and uphold these aforesaid, who walk contrary to the Steps, Practices, and Examples of Christ and his Apostles, without sinning against Christ, in his so doing, and bring upon himself Gods Plagues, for not coming out of their sins?

X. Seeing the Scripture saith, *The Kingdome of Heaven cometh not with outward Observation, Loe, here, or Loe, there; neither standeth in Meates Drinkes, or Apparels, but in Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Spirit; and a man believing these things.*

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether for such an one, to go after such outward Observations, and to joyn with those that cry them up, (and impose them upon great Penalties) as the True Religion, and best Reformed Church, is not a sin against God, and a neglecting of his Command, who saith, *Com: out from among them, and be ye Separate, and I will receive you; and against Christs Command, who saith, Go not after them; and contrary to the Apostles Doctrine, who saith, There is no fellowship between the Table of God, and the table of Devills; notwithstanding any Law or Commandement from any man or men whatsoever?*

XI. Seeing the Scripture saith, *God is a Spirit, and will be Worshipped in Spirit and Truth; and that he seeketh such to Worship him;*

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether a man that is perswaded of the Truth thereof (and is acquainted with Gods Spirit) and sees men going on to set up a Form without the Power, and to set up Deceit, and Hypocrisie, quite out of Truth and Sincerity, and that man joyn with them in their Dissimulation, as to thank God (as they call it) *For their Election before time, and Vocation in time, and for their Sanctification and Justification, and Future hope of Glorification; and at the same time say, Lord have Mercy upon us Miserable Sinners, we have Erred and Strayed from thy Wayes, like lost Sheep; and there is no health in us; and then say again, As it was in the Beginning, is now, and ever shall be, World without End.* Whether a man may with a safe Conscience, or can by the Spirit of Truth, say these things without great Sin and Iniquity against God; and as being Guilty both of Mockery and Lying? for though these things are spoken by Drunkards, Swearers, and Lyars, [Now] yet it was not so from the Beginning, neither shall it be so in the World without End, nor when the people shall be all Righteous, and there shall be no Destroyer upon all the Holy Mount, nor any that worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lye.

XII. Seeing the Scripture saith, *That the Spirit helpeth our Infirmities, and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; and that the Prayers of the Wicked are Abomination unto God; and he that hath a Male in his flock, and offers to God a Female, is Accursed; And the Spirit of God is called the Spirit of Prayer, and Supplication; and seeing that Necessities and Wants are the ground of Petitions and Complaints; and seeing the Scripture saith, That Christ hath lighted every man that cometh into the world with the True Light, that thereby they may see their Wants and Necessities, and from the sence thereof, and in that they pray unto God for Supplies;*

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether a man that thus believe, and in his heart is perswaded of the Truth thereof, may, or ought to conform to, and joyn in, and with such Prayers, as are Artificially made, and by the Profane performed, and put up to a God, whom they know not, with-

without sin and wickedness against the Pure God? Seeing, *He that Names the Name of Christ, is to depart from Iniquity; neither can any man say in Truth, that Christ is Lord, but by the Holy-Ghost*: And for these Prayers and Services to be Imposed upon him, as long as he lives without any Variation, both in that time when he was without Grace, and after if he come to Receive Grace; and also when he comes to be strong in Grace; and if he goes about to Depart or Separate from the Prayers and Services aforesaid, he thereby makes himself a Prey; whether this be not great Wickedness in Gods sight, and Provokes to Jealousie the Eyes of his Glory, and will bring Swift Destruction upon him that departs not from them?

XIII. Seeing the Scripture saith, *The Church is in God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that it is the Ground and Pillar of Truth, and without Spot or Wrinkle (or any such thing) Built up of Living Stones a Holy Temple in the Lord*;

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether a man may meet with a company of Drunkards, Swearers, and Lyars, and Proud Men and Women; and Say, as they Say, and Sit when they Sit, and Stand when they Stand, and Sing, and Pray, when and what they Sing and Pray, and Cuse and Bless, when they Cuse and Bless; and call them a Church, and the Things and Gestures which they Perform Gods Worship and Service, without great Abomination before the Lord, and Sinning against God and his own Conscience, considering a Church in the New-Testament, is so described as aforesaid?

XIV. Seeing England is called a Church, and all the People within the Territories thereto belonging, are said to be Members thereof: and you who are called Bishops, and Fathers in God, are said to take upon you the Government, and Oversight thereof; and say, *You follow the Examples of Christ, and the Apostles therein; who accounted it their Meat and Drink to do the will of God, and to spend, and be spent for his Name, and the good of his People; Preaching the Word in Season, and out of Season; Confirming the Weak, and Visiting the Sick; and by Sound Doctrine, and a Godly Life, strove to Convince Gain-sayers, and to stop the Mouths of Opposers*: These things duely considered in our hearts,

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether all those who have gone and straid from your wayes, not only because the Name of a BISHOP hath been taken up, and the Work neglected; but also because the Way of your Promotion and Climbing up, hath rather seemed to be like those John speakes of in his 16th. Chap. Who are said, *Not to come in at the True Door, but are climed up another Way, than those Bishops did whom Paul speakes of in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus; who saith, That a Bishop must be blameless, and a Lover of good Men, not greedy of filthy Lucer, but Patient, not Covetous; (but seeing the contrary Qualifications are found amongst those that say they are Bishops)* whether we should not sin against the living God, and his Righteous Law, if we should not bear Witnes against Such, and their Wayes? and if we did not do so, whether the God of Heaven & Earth would not leave us to be Partakers of their Plagues, because we refused, and were afraid to bear witnes for him against their Sins?

XV. Seeing the Scripture speaketh of *Being Baptized into one Body, and into Christ, whereby such put on Christ; and that there is one Baptisme, and one Faith, and one Hope of our Calling, and one Lord Jesus Christ*;

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether a Man that thus believes, may without sinning against God, call Sprinkling a little Water in the Face of a Childe, and Signing it with the Sign of the Crosse, and to have three

or *four Men and Women* present, to promise that the *Childe* shall forsake the Devil, and ALL his Works, and Poms and Vanities of this World; When as these promising Persons (it may be) never look after the Childe more, nor take Care what becomes of it; but themselves bring forth the Works of the Devil dayly in the whole course of their lives, Whether a man may call this that *Baptisme* before named, or a Baptizing into the Congregation of Gods holy Church, by those Actions, Persons and Gestures aforesaid, without sinning against God, by deep Hypocrisie and Deceit?

XVI. Seeing the Scripture speaks of *Dauids* not being Puffed in Mind, and of his Mourning by reason of his Sin, and of his Waving his Couch with his Tears, and of having all his Bones broken by reason of his grief, &c.

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether Men, whose Hearts are hardened in Sin, and who never truly shed Tears for Sin, and are both Puffed in Mind, and Filled with Pride; (and seeing We with Others, who know this to be true by dayly Experience,) may lawfully sing these Words and Sayings of *David*, and those aforesaid, that believes these Things to be done in Formality and Hypocrisie, may joyn with them in these Things, and call this Practice the Worship of God, and a Singing to the Praise and Glory of God, without being Guilty of Deep Provocation and Hypocrisie against God?

XVII. Seeing the Scripture speaks of False Prophets, both in the Old and New Testament; and tells us, That we may know them by their Fruits, and those Markes and Characters, laid down in the Scripture to discover them by; As that they are such as Preach for Hire, and Divine for Money, and Seek for Gain from their Quarter, and Prepare War against, or go to Law with those who refuse to put into their Mouthes, or to maintain them: and Christ saith, We shall know them by their Fruits, as that they are called of Men, Rabbi, or Lord, or Master; And that they love Greetings in the Market-Place, or to be Honour'd before the People, or to have Men put off their Hats unto them, or to stand Bare before them; and they love the Uppermost Roomes at Feasts, and will have the Cheifest Places in the Synagogues, or those Places now called Churches; and for their Habir, they go in long Robes of Black like the *Chymarim*: And if People will not pay them, they will prove like Thrones, and Thistles, to Scratch, Prick, and Tear Peoples and of such Men, or Trees, Christ saith, We must not expect to gather either Grapes or Figs. And Christ saith further, That we may thoroughly know them, They are like Wolves in Sheep: Cloathing, or wearing White upon Black; but inwardly Ravening and Devouring, being one thing in their Words and Profession, and another in Life and Conversation. And therefore,

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether a Man may Lawfully, without Sinning against God, and Transgressing the Scriptures of Truth, either Hear, or Follow such Men who bear (as in their Fore-heads) the Markes and Fruits aforesaid, or maintain them, by feeding their Covetous Minds with Hire, or paying as towards the Sheeps Cloathing aforesaid? Or rather, Whether a Man that feareth God, is not bound in Conscience to bear witness against them?

XVIII. Seeing the Papists plead for a Continued Succession; and those that are called Protestant BISHOPS do the same; and both of them being out of the Life and Practices (and Principles in many things) of Christ and His Apostles, as by the Scriptures of Truth doth appear, being understood plainly, as they are spoken without Forced and Constrained Meanings;

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether that kind of Succession which

which they both plead for, be that Succession which a Man must derive unto himself, or he cannot be a True Minister of Christ? Or whether the True, Necessary, and Rightfull Derivative Succession, stands not rather in that same Spirit and Power, which the Apostles were indued withall from on High, and whereby they were made able Ministers of the New Testament, nor of the Letter but of the Spirit; and according to which they spake, As it gave them intregance; And further considering, That the Naturall or Outward Succession before mentioned, is according unto the first Priesthood, which stood in a Naturall or Outward Line and Descent, and was made by a Carnal Commandment, and could not continue by reason of Death: but Christ was not so made a Minister or Priest, but after another Order, and according to another Law, (viz.) The Power of an endless Life: According to which the Apostles were, and all true Ministers are made, who are truly the Successors of Christ, and his Apostles? So that these three Questions for the Resolving of the Case of Conscience aforesaid, are necessary to be Resolved;

First, Whether either Papist or Protestant (so called) can derive unto themselves the continued Apostolicall Succession (aforesaid) from Christ down-wards to this Day?

Second Quest. is, Whether the Succession aforesaid, be sufficient without the Gift of the Spirit, to make a Minister of the Gospel?

Third Quest. is, Whether the Spirit and Power from on High be not of it self, without any further Aid or Thing, as from Man, or by Man, sufficient, and that only wherein stands the Authority that brings unto Unity and Uniformity, and is according to that Way and Manner that the Apostles were made Ministers? for they said, They believed, and therefore they spake: and when it pleased God, to reveale his Son in them, then they went, and Preached the Gospel, and did not stay for Mans Commission, but Ministered from that; and not of Man, nor by Man, nor from Man, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ, as aforesaid; whose steps the True Ministers follow unto this Day, and have Christs presence with them according to promise, who said, And Lo, I am with you alway, even to the End of the World.

XIX. Seeing the Outward, Naturall, or Personall Derivative Succession, is so disputable among those called Christians; and considering, if it could be proved, yet its sufficiency (without the Holy Ghost) is Opposed and Denied; and seeing, as they say, the Authority and Verity of the Scripture depends upon a Belief and Knowledge of the Succession Outward and Personall as aforesaid; and so from, or by, the Tradition of the Church to be received (as they speak.) These things truly weighed,

The Case of Conscience to be resolved, is, Whether a Man must not know, and be Turned to something within himself, (though not of himself) which only can give unto him the certain Knowledge both of the Truth and Authority of the Scripture, (which Gift of Grace in himself, is as a Witness in him, and Seales unto, and Assures him of the Truth of what is written, whereby his own heart answers the Hearers of those holy men who writ the Scriptures, as face answers face in a Glass) and whereby he hath Hope and Comfort through the Scriptures? Or whether a Man must Believe, and Depend upon them, who say they are the Apostles Successors, and have received their Power from Peter, but do imitate him in little at all, besides, in his denying of his Master, and Disssembling for fear of the Jews, for both which he was blamed and reprov'd? And also considering, that both the Popish Inquisitions, and those cal-

led Protestants, *Compulsions by Paines and Prisons*, are an Infallible Note or Mark of the False Church and Ministry; both which are Described by their compelling (*All both small and great to worship the Beast and his Image*) by outward Paines and Punishments, which those that follow the Lamb, and are washed with his Blood, are Saved and Redeemed from; so that they cannot bow down, nor submit unto them.

XX. Seeing that severall Protestant Writers, as *Chillingworth*, (who was a Man of Note) and others who have written against the Papists, and have affirmed in Opposition to them and their Tenet, *That Right Reason is the Judge of Controversies*; and every Mans particular Reason within himself, is Judge for himself, as hath been affirmed (and that truly) and seeing that Gods Faithfull People do Believe and Preach, *That Gods Gift of Grace and Light in Man is the first Principle of pure Religion and Judge of Controversy*, unto which a Man must have his mind turned, and in it believe, before he can Worship God acceptably: and seeing they agree with the True Protestant Principle herein, and their Lives being according to what they Professe and Teach; and considering those who call themselves Protestants, and the Apostles Successors, but are not True to the Protestant Principles, in that they Imprison and Punish men, (meerly) for things relating to their Consciences: And thereby condemn their professed Principles by their Practices, (and so make themselves Transgressors) and therefore justifie the People of God aforesaid, who separate from them as such Transgressors. These things duly considered of,

The Case of Conscience to be Resolved, is, Whether those Called Protestants aforesaid, who have Apostatized from their Principles (and lost both the Life and Power of Religion) should come out of the Apostacy and return to the first and primitive Principle? or whether those who are in the True Principle and Practice (and retain their Integrity) should go into the Apostacy unto them, seeing the Scripture saith, *Go not thou to them, but let them come to thee?*

POST-SCRIPT.

These things are written, not to kindle Dissention, nor to blow up the Coales of Contention; but rather for Satisfaction, both to others who are inquiring what the Reason is, why many Godly People separate from those called Bishops? Or why they do not joy in Commons with the Multitude? As also to Stir up and Munde those of their Duty, (who say they are Fathers in God) That they may make it appear (if they are such) and that by a Godly Life, and sound Arguments, to Convince those that are out of the Way, that all may be reclaimed, who have erred from the Way of Life, and be brought back again to the Shepherd, and Bishop of their Souls, that there may be but one Shepherd, and one Sheep-fold; and that there may be no noise of a Hammer heard in the Re-building of the Temple, nor any cries from Prisons, (against those that call themselves Reformers of the Church) but that they may effect the work to the re-joycing of Zion, and shaming of all Her Enemies; not by Might, nor Power, nor Whips, nor Goales, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts, which shall certainly overturn them, if they refuse to trust to it; or only, and alone, to make use of it in the Work which they call the Lords.

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THE END

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